PATTERNS OF POWER

The Robe of Nature

An Anatomy of the Naturalising Move — A Capstone to Three Genealogies

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Preface

This short paper is a capstone, and it stands over three longer studies rather than adding a fourth case to them. *Second Nature* traced the economic naturalisation of hierarchy — the warrants by which property and the market were converted into a nature beyond political argument. *Nature's Verdict* traced the biological naturalisation — the conversion of social inequality into a verdict of the struggle for existence. *First Nature* traced the racial and national naturalisation — the conversion of the nation and the race into a primordial fact of blood and antiquity. Each followed the same move through different material, and the purpose of this paper is to lift the move clear of its three instances and set it out on its own.

The claim is that the three genealogies are, beneath their different subjects, a single argument: that there exists one operation — the conversion of a made arrangement into a discovered nature by means of a warrant — which recurs across the registers of economics, biology, and blood, joined at a common root, driven by a common mechanism, and built to a common design. To see the move in the abstract is to be able to recognise it in the wild, in any register, including the ones not yet written; and that recognition, rather than any verdict on a particular arrangement, is the practical gift the inquiry was built to give.And at its centre the paper widens the lens once more, past the modern West altogether, to argue that this same move — a legitimating belief that lifts an order beyond argument, tended by a class that interprets it — is a near-universal feature of durable hierarchy, one that unrelated civilisations arrived at independently, each from the materials of its own world.

The paper holds, as its companions held, the discipline that gives the whole project its force: it disarms only the defence from nature, and leaves standing everything else. To show that a thing was made is not to show it is worthless, and the distinction between the *made* and the *arbitrary* is guarded here as carefully as in the studies it summarises. It ends, as they ended, by returning the arrangement to politics.

A Note on This Collaboration

As throughout this series, the spine of the study is Thomas J. Bryan's and the documentary work is the model's. This paper introduces no new load-bearing facts of its own; it recombines the specifics already verified across the three genealogies it stands over, and where it names a date, a text, or a coinage, that anchor was established and checked in the study from which it is drawn.

One feature of the method deserves notice, because a capstone is especially tempted to overreach. The paper takes pains to state what the inquiry does *not* claim — that the genealogy refutes nothing merely by showing its origin, that constructed things may be precious and just, that "made" means amendable and not false. The discipline is the point. A genealogy that proved too much would prove nothing, and would itself become a revealed doctrine of the kind it exists to expose. As ever, the paper holds its own thesis the way it asks the reader to hold every claim that an arrangement is natural: as something tested, not revealed.

The Argument in Seven Parts

I — The Move. A hierarchy rests on force, which is dear; belief makes it cheap. The most powerful belief re-describes a made arrangement as a discovered nature — found, not made; given, not chosen — so the force beneath it vanishes and it passes out of the realm of things one may argue over. That re-description is the warrant.

II — The Changing Robe. The warrant wears any robe the age will credit — God, reason, labour, history, number, evolution, fitness, blood — and changes it when the old one wears thin, while the single job never changes. The robe is cut to fit the audience; its function is always to hide the body, to make the made look found.

III — One Retreat. The robes are not a wardrobe but a sequence. All three studies open at the same grave — the death of the divine warrant — and all flee to the same heir, Nature, because a secular age that had dethroned God kept the craving for a court of last appeal beyond the vote, and Nature alone could still end an argument. Malthus performed the template: a social fact re-described as a law of nature, to defeat the claim that society could be remade.

IV — The Inward Migration. The retreat has a direction. The warrant burrows from what a man owns to what he is to what he was born — property, fitness, blood — each ground deeper and less alterable than the last, and deeper is deadlier, for a community sealed by blood can deal with the bodies it will not admit only by their removal. And the promotion is the proof: a found truth needs no patron, so the fact that these had to be promoted — and their truer rivals starved — is the fingerprint of the maker.

V — The Convergent Priesthood. Widen the lens past the modern West and the move proves universal: every durable hierarchy in history has paired a legitimating belief — the Mandate of Heaven, the karma that fixes caste, the divine right of kings — with an interpreter class to read it, from the Confucian literati and the Brahmins to the modern economist and race-scientist. It is not religion but the office that matters, and the office converges, appearing unprompted in civilisations that never met, because the same problem — make the made look given — selects the same organ: the belief that makes force cheap is the very thing of which durability is made.

VI — The Tell. The move leaves signatures: the claim of antiquity, the claim of inevitability, the appeal beyond politics, the promise of a final state. And though it has its sponsors it is rarely a plot — most who carry a warrant inherited the arrangement as the furniture of the world and mistook the made for the found, exactly as the warrant intends.

VII — The Verdict Returned to Politics. The inquiry holds the genetic fallacy at full strength and disarms one thing only: the defence from nature. From that follows a posture — debug rather than defend, tested not revealed, tend the garden without expecting a final victory — and a single conclusion: what was made by human beings, human beings may remake.

A Note on Sources

This paper rests, before all else, on the three studies it summarises, and the reader who wants the evidence for any compressed claim made here will find it set out and sourced in them: *Second Nature*, on the economic warrant from Filmer and Locke to Malthus, the marginalists, and the Austrians; *Nature's Verdict*, on the biological warrant from Malthus through Spencer and Darwin to Galton and the eugenic terminus; and *First Nature*, on the racial and national warrant from Herder and the invention of race through Gobineau and Renan to the racial state.

Beyond them, the paper draws on the framework this project has built across its other volumes — the account of a hierarchy as a floor of force beneath a managed belief; the distinction between a tested doctrine, revised when the evidence defeats it, and a revealed one, which reads every failure as insufficient faith; the analysis of the loaded word that outruns its authors; and the figure of the inherited arrangement taken for the furniture of the world. The posture set out in the final part — debug, do not defend; tend the counterweights without end; treat the promise of a final state as the tell of a revealed doctrine — is the one this project has argued for throughout, gathered here into a single page.

PART I

THE MOVE

The single operation the three genealogies were tracking, stated in the abstract — how a made arrangement is re-described as a discovered nature, and the force beneath it made to vanish

A durable hierarchy rests, in the last instance, on force — on the court and the police that defend a property, on the army that holds a frontier, on the freeze and the fleet that back a currency. But force is expensive, and a hierarchy that had to compel every act of obedience at the point of a weapon could not last a season, let alone the centuries the great orders have lasted. What makes force cheap enough to endure is a *belief* laid over it: a managed conviction, installed in the ruled and the rulers alike, that the arrangement is right, or necessary, or simply the way things are, so that most obedience is given freely and the weapon need only be shown to the few who refuse. The three genealogies this paper stands over were each a study of one such belief, and of the single move by which it is made.

The making of the unmade

The move is this. Take something that human beings have built — a distribution of property, a ranking of classes, a community of nationals — a thing that is in plain fact the product of force and law and history and sheer contingency, and that might therefore have been built otherwise, and might yet be rebuilt. Then re-describe it. Say that it is not, after all, a thing anyone made, but a thing that was *found* — a feature of the world, a law of nature, a fact of biology, a decree of God, the verdict of the market, the inheritance of the blood. Say that it was not chosen but given, not arranged but discovered, not made but simply *there*, as the mountains are there. And in the saying, something disappears. The force underneath drops out of sight. The arrangement stops looking like anything anyone did, and so stops looking like anything anyone could undo. It passes out of the realm of things that may be argued over — out of politics — and into the realm of things that must be obeyed, like the weather and the tides.

This re-description is what the genealogies call the *warrant*: the device that converts a made arrangement into a nature, and so removes it from the reach of the politics that might amend it. The warrant does not defend the arrangement on its merits, in the open, where a defence can be answered; it does something far more powerful, which is to place the arrangement beyond the need for defence altogether, by denying that it is the kind of thing one argues about. You do not argue with gravity. You do not vote on the tides. And once a hierarchy has been successfully dressed as a nature, you do not argue with it either — which is the whole of the point, and the whole of the work the warrant was built to do. The three studies traced this one move through three different materials. This paper extracts the move itself.

PART II

THE CHANGING ROBE

How the warrant keeps changing its name — God, reason, labour, history, number, evolution, fitness, blood — while the single job it does never changes at all

The first thing the three genealogies reveal, set side by side, is that the warrant is promiscuous in its forms and constant in its function. It will wear any robe the age finds convincing, and it changes the robe precisely when the old one wears thin, but underneath every robe it does the identical job. A short inventory, drawn from the three studies, makes the constancy visible.

One job, a dozen names

In the economic register — the subject of the first genealogy — the warrant for property and the market ran through a long succession of costumes, each suited to its century. It began as *God*: the divine gift of dominion, the Adamic title, the papal donation of whole continents under the authority of Almighty God. When the religious warrant frayed, it became *reason* and *natural law* — property as a right discoverable by the intellect, binding even if there were no God. Then *labour*, in Locke's hands — property as the natural extension of a man's ownership of himself. Then *history* and the *iron law*, when Malthus and Ricardo naturalised the poverty the market produced. Then *number*, when the marginalists mathematised the market into an equilibrium that settled, like a physical system, to its natural state. And at last *evolution* — the market as a spontaneous, evolved order, grown like a language, designed by no one. Seven robes, one body.

In the biological register — the second genealogy — the warrant for social inequality wore the robe of the *struggle for existence* and the *survival of the fittest*: the millionaire as the product of natural selection, the pauper as the unfit whom nature was working to weed out, every act of relief a tampering with a beneficial law. And in the racial and national register — the third — it wore the robes of *antiquity*, of the cultural *soul* of the people, of the invented *biology* of race, welded at last into the warrant of *blood*: the nation as an immemorial community of descent, sealed and given, fixed before a man drew breath. The materials could hardly be more different — a price, a species, a people. The move is the same in each: a force-backed human arrangement, re-described as a discovered nature, by whatever warrant the age will credit. The robe is cut to fit the audience; a religious age is told the order is God's, a scientific age that it is nature's, a romantic age that it is the blood's. What never varies is the function the robe performs, which is to hide the body — to make the made look found.

PART III

ONE RETREAT

That the changing robes are not a wardrobe but a sequence — a single retreat of hierarchy from God to Nature, performed three times over, once the democratic age had made the old sanction unsayable

The robes catalogued in the previous part are not a wardrobe, from which each age idly selects whatever it fancies; they fall in an order, and the order carries the deepest truth the three studies hold between them. For the warrant does not merely change its costume — it *retreats*, along a single line, from one definite point of departure toward one definite destination, and the three genealogies are chapters of that one retreat.

The same grave

The evidence lies hidden in plain sight, in a fact one notices only on setting the three studies side by side: that all three, written separately and about wholly different things, begin in the same place — at a graveside. The economic genealogy opens with Sir Robert Filmer and the doctrine that God gave the whole earth to Adam, and with the papal donation that handed continents to Christian kings under the authority of Almighty God. The biological genealogy opens with the plain observation that the old warrant for hierarchy had been God — the divine right of kings, the God-given Great Chain of Being — and that what a sceptical new age would accept in its place was nature. The racial genealogy opens with a peasant whose loyalty ran upward, to dynasty and to God, and who belonged to no nation and no race in any sense the modern world would recognise. Three studies, three subjects, one starting gun: the death of the divine warrant. This is not a symmetry imposed on them from outside. It is the thing each independently discovered, from its own material, and it is the first sign that they are not three histories but one history told three times over.

The principle that had to be answered

What died at that graveside was the sanction that had underwritten nearly every hierarchy in the Western world for a thousand years: the conviction that rank was the will of God, that the king sat by divine right and the lord stood above the peasant by the settled order of a created world, so that to question the arrangement was very nearly to question Providence itself. The Reformation, the disenchantment of the heavens, the Enlightenment, and at last the American and French revolutions broke that conviction and set in its place a principle of terrifying corrosive power — that authority ascends from the consent of the governed, that men are born equal, and, most dangerous of all, that the arrangements men live under are *made* by men, and what was made may be unmade. This is the principle the three genealogies show hierarchy fleeing from, in three directions at once. For once an arrangement is admitted to be made, it is admitted to be a fit subject for politics: it may be debated, judged by its results, and altered by those it governs. The whole labour of the warrant, in every register, is to take that concession back — to deny that the thing was made, and to restore, in a form a secular and scientific age would still credit, the lost assurance that the order is simply given and not ours to revise.

The only possible heir

And here is why all three retreats run to the same destination. An age that had dethroned God did not thereby lose its hunger for a court of last appeal — for some authority standing outside human choice, beyond the reach of any vote, that could settle a dispute not by winning the argument but by declaring there was no argument to be had. The need outlived the God who had answered it; and in a disenchanted century only one candidate remained that the age still treated as sacred in precisely that sense — *nature*. Nature is impersonal, and so seems impartial; it is lawful, and so seems necessary; and above all it is not

answerable, for one does not petition gravity or take a vote on the tides. Nature was the one thing left that could perform God's old office of ending an argument before it began, and so it inherited God's throne. This is what the naturalising move most deeply is: the form the sacred warrant takes after the death of the sacred. The operation that once said *God ordains this* now says *nature ordains this* — to the same end, with the same effect, which is to lift the arrangement clean out of the hands of the people who must live inside it.

The template

If one wants the precise moment the new warrant was first turned, in the new idiom, against the new and dangerous principle, it stands in the pamphlet that roots all three studies: Malthus, in 1798. He wrote, by his own account, to refute the perfectibilians — Godwin and Condorcet — who had drawn the revolutionary conclusion in its purest form, that human misery was the product of bad arrangements and would yield to better ones. Malthus answered them not with God but with arithmetic, with a law of population he presented as a fact of nature against which reform was simply futile, so that the poverty of the poor stood revealed as the order of the world rather than the work of men. That is the entire move, performed once and cleanly at the hinge of the age: a social fact re-described as a natural law, in the new secular language of science, for the express purpose of defeating the claim that society could be remade. Everything that follows — the labour title and the market equilibrium and the evolved order, the survival of the fittest, the immemorial blood of the nation — is a variation on the operation Malthus performed first. He is the root of the three studies not because each happens to quote him, but because each, in its own material, repeats him.

PART IV

THE INWARD MIGRATION

That the retreat has a direction — the warrant burrowing from what a man owns to what he is to what he was born, each ground deeper and deadlier than the last — and that the very promotion which carried it is the proof of the making

The flight from God to nature is not the whole of the pattern, for the flight has a *direction*, and the direction is the most disquieting thing the three studies disclose when they are read in sequence. As each naturalisation is exposed and begins to fail, the warrant does not surrender the field; it withdraws to a deeper ground, and claims there a nature more primordial, and more inescapable, than the one it has just lost. It burrows inward.

From the wallet to the blood

Lay the three studies in their order and the descent is unmistakable. The economic warrant naturalises what a man *has* — his property, his place in the market, the things he owns and exchanges; it is the most external of the three, fixed to the wallet and the ledger. The biological warrant reaches deeper, to what a man *is* — his fitness, his worth in the struggle, the qualities of the organism itself; it has left the ledger for the body. And the racial and national warrant reaches deepest of all, to what a man was *born* — his blood, his descent, the people he belonged to before he had chosen or done anything whatever; it is fixed not to the wallet, nor even to the body's capacities, but to the bare circumstance of birth, which is why its own genealogy was obliged to name it *first nature*. Property, fitness, blood: the warrant migrates from the most alterable ground a person stands on toward the least, retreating before each exposure to a stratum harder to argue with, until it arrives at the single stratum a person can never alter at all — the accident of where and to whom he was born.

Deeper is deadlier

This inward migration is no mere curiosity of arrangement; it is an escalation toward the grave, and the reason is built into the depths themselves. What is shallow can be repaired, and what is repairable need not be destroyed. A man may lose his property and gain it again; the warrant of the market, however cruel, leaves a door ajar in principle — the pauper might yet rise. A man judged unfit stands nearer the edge, yet may still be suffered to live, unaided, at the margin; the warrant of fitness withholds the helping hand but does not, of itself, require a killing. But a man whose disqualification is his *blood* stands beyond every remedy, for blood is the one thing that can neither be earned nor shed: the outsider can never become an insider, however faithfully he assimilates, and the insider marked as carrying the wrong descent can never be cleansed of it, however loyally he conforms. A community sealed by blood has, in the last resort, no way to deal with the bodies it has defined as alien and cannot convert into belonging — save their removal. So the inward migration of the warrant is at the same time a migration toward lethality: the deeper the nature it claims, the less escapable the exclusion it licenses, and the racial study's terminus in the camps is not an accident befalling that history but the destination written into the depth of its warrant. The three genealogies, read in their order, descend together from the merely unjust toward the murderous — and the descent tracks, step for step, the warrant's retreat into the body and the blood.

The promotion is the proof

One feature remains that the three share, and it is not a parallel but a self-refutation, worth setting last because it turns each doctrine against its own central claim. Every warrant, in every register, presents itself as a *found* truth — a discovered fact of nature, of the market, or of the blood, resting on its own evidence and asking only to be acknowledged. But a found truth needs no champion. Gravity is not funded by those it favours; the tides are not taught in endowed chairs and repeated in the press until they

pass for common sense; a genuine law of nature holds whether or not anyone is paid to affirm it, and recruits no patrons. The doctrines these studies trace did the opposite at every turn. They had to be *promoted* — selected, in each case, not for their truth but for their use, advanced and funded and canonised by the very men whose position they justified, while the rival readings that flattered no one in possession of power were left to starve. And the starved rivals are the tell, for study after study finds them to have been the *truer* account: Kropotkin's cooperative reading of evolution, marginalised in its hour, is now ordinary biology; Renan's nation of consent was the better description of how nations in fact cohere; the Scottish economists who called property a human convention were simply right. The doctrine that prevailed did not prevail on the merits — it frequently lost on the merits — and prevailed instead on the patronage. There lies the confession buried in the history of every one of these natures: a thing that must be promoted to be believed, and kept alive by starving its betters, is not a fact of the world standing on its own. It is a made thing with a sponsor, and the sponsorship is the fingerprint of the maker.

PART V

THE CONVERGENT PRIESTHOOD

That the office is not religion but a function any belief may perform — why every durable hierarchy in history has grown a legitimating cosmology and a class to interpret it, and why the same organ appears, unprompted, in civilisations that never met

The three studies are studies of the modern West, and a reader might take the move they trace — the flight from God to Nature — for a peculiarity of one civilisation in one secularising age. It is not. Step back from the three modern instances and they reveal themselves as a single recent episode in a pattern older than any of them and very nearly universal: every durable hierarchy mankind has built, in every age and on every continent, has rested on a legitimating belief that performs the office this paper has described, and has grown a class of interpreters to administer it. The modern West did not invent the move. It only re-staffed it.

Not religion, but its office

The first thing to see is that the office is defined by what it does, not by what it invokes — that it is not *religion*, as such, that legitimates a hierarchy, but any belief whatever that can perform the work: to ground the order in something outside human choice, to place it beyond the reach of a vote, to read every challenge to it as a kind of error or sin, and to make obedience feel like alignment with the way things are rather than submission to the people on top. A personal god can do this; so can an impersonal cosmic order with no god in it; so can a moral law of rebirth; so can a curve read off a graph. This is why the secularisation of the West, which felt at the time like the abolition of the priesthood, was nothing of the kind. It was a change of vestment. The robe of Nature does the identical work the robe of God once did, and the credentialed expert who pronounces the verdict of the market or reads the measurements of the race occupies, in the structure of the order, precisely the chair the priest once occupied — the chair of the one who alone can tell you what the unappealable authority requires. The lab coat is a vestment too.

Every order its priesthood

Trace the pattern across the civilisations and it is unmistakable; each pairs a legitimating cosmology with a class that reads it. Pharaonic Egypt had the god-king and the temple priesthood that tended his divinity. Imperial China had the Mandate of Heaven — the Son of Heaven ruling by the warrant of an impersonal cosmic order — administered and expounded by the Confucian scholar-officials, the literati, a whole bureaucracy selected to interpret and apply the doctrine. India had the caste order, legitimated by karma and rebirth, on the logic that one's birth-station is the just fruit of conduct in past lives, to be borne faithfully for the sake of a better birth in the next, so that to accept one's place was piety and to challenge it a defiance of cosmic law — and the reading of that order belonged to the Brahmins, who held a near-monopoly on the sacred knowledge and who, tellingly, are recorded as having written themselves to the very top of the hierarchy they expounded. Medieval Christendom had the divine right of kings and the God-given Great Chain of Being, with the clergy as its interpreters; the Islamic caliphates had the caliph as successor to the Prophet and the ulama, the scholars of the sacred law, to say what that law required. And the modern secular West has the warrant of Nature — the market, the species, the blood — and its interpreters, the economist and the race-scientist and the national historian and the jurist. The interpreter class is a universal feature, and it always has the same shape: it stands between the people and the warrant, monopolises the reading of it, and is sustained by the very order it pronounces just — which is no small part of why it pronounces it just. The priesthood is itself a beneficiary, and this is the standing institutional form of the promotion the previous part exposed: not an occasional campaign got up by interested men, but a permanent, provisioned, self-perpetuating organ for the manufacture and the maintenance of the legitimating belief.

Why the same organ, unprompted

Why should the same structure appear in civilisations that never met and shared no materials — the Brahmin learning nothing from the mandarin, the mandarin nothing from the medieval clerk? Not by copying. They converged because the same problem, worked under the same logic, selects for the same solution. The problem is everywhere identical: how to make a hierarchy cheap enough to last, since naked force is far too dear to sustain across centuries. The logic is everywhere identical: make the made look given, and obedience comes nearly free. And the solution any apex reaches for is assembled from whatever materials its world holds ready — a high personal god where the culture has one, an impersonal Heaven where it has that, a moral mathematics of rebirth, a prestige science. The content is parochial; the organ is universal. This is convergence in the exact sense the naturalist means it, the same functional structure arrived at independently down unrelated lines, as the eye has evolved many separate times in creatures that share no common eye, because the problem of seeing keeps the same shape wherever there is light.

And there is a harder edge to the convergence, which removes the last temptation to imagine a gallery of cunning apexes each inventing the trick alone. Picture instead the countless attempts at durable rule across history, of which the ones that happened upon a workable legitimating belief, and built a priesthood to keep it, grew cheap to maintain and lasted — and are remembered as the great civilisations — while the ones that tried to stand on force alone stayed ruinously expensive, fell early, and left little behind. The reason every durable hierarchy carries the organ is, at bottom, nearly tautological: the organ is what durability is made of. The belief that makes force cheap is not an ornament fastened to the hierarchy after the fact; it is the load-bearing member that lets the hierarchy stand. To find a lasting order without one would be like finding a long-lived animal with no way to feed.

The valve

One difference among the priesthoods matters more than all the rest, and it points the way to this paper's last word. The interpreter class is, by its very nature, the great engine for turning a tested belief into a revealed one, for its authority rests on the belief never being refuted, and so it is forever tempted to read each failure of the order — each famine, each defeat, each plain injustice — not as evidence against the doctrine but as a lapse of fidelity to it: a heresy, a pollution, an insufficiency of faith. Yet not every legitimating belief was built equally sealed, and the most instructive exception is the Chinese one. The Mandate of Heaven carried a release valve in its own text: the Mandate could be *withdrawn*, and a dynasty that misruled — that brought famine, disorder, and revolt — was judged to have forfeited it, so that a successful rebellion was read not as a crime against Heaven but as Heaven's own verdict delivered. A warrant built that way still sanctifies the ruler, but it also, quietly, holds him to a standard and licenses his replacement when he fails it, which is the whole difference between a belief that only blesses power and one that, however crudely, also checks it. That difference is the entire subject of the paper's final part, for it is the difference between a nature a people may only obey and an arrangement a people may still argue with.

PART VI

THE TELL

How to recognise the move in the wild — the signatures a naturalising warrant always leaves, and why it almost never began as a plot

Because the move is constant beneath its changing robes, it can be recognised, and the recognising is the practical gift of the whole inquiry. A naturalising warrant leaves signatures, and a reader who has learned to see them can catch the move in the act, in any register, including the ones not yet written.

The signatures

The first signature is the *claim of antiquity*. When an arrangement insists that it is the oldest thing, the way it has always been, the immemorial order — when the newest invention dresses as the most ancient — that is the tell, for the loudest claims of primordiality cluster, with suspicious regularity, around the most recent constructions. The nation that was assembled in the nineteenth century swears it is eternal; the market order codified at Mont Pèlerin presents itself as the natural state that obtains whenever planning ceases. The second signature is the *claim of inevitability* — the insistence that there is no alternative, that one cannot fight the market or human nature or the laws of biology, that the arrangement is simply reality and dissent is a kind of category error. The third is the *appeal beyond politics*: the assurance that the matter is not political at all but merely factual, scientific, natural — that to bring it into the arena of choice is to misunderstand what kind of thing it is. And the fourth is the *promise of a final state* — the classless society, the end of history, the self-correcting market, the purified nation — for the claim that history has a terminus, a resting place beyond which there is nothing left to argue, is the surest mark of a doctrine that has stopped being tested and started being revealed.

Why it is not a plot

To these signatures the inquiry adds a caution that is also a relief, and one that the talk of promotion and sponsorship in the part above must not be allowed to drown out. To say that a warrant was advanced by those it served is emphatically not to say that those who now carry it are cynics performing a fraud. The move, for all its sponsors, is rarely a conspiracy, and the reader should resist the comfort of imagining one, because the comfort is false and disarms the wrong enemy. Most who carry a naturalising warrant are people who have inherited an arrangement as the furniture of the world — who never saw the architect's moment when men with power solved a problem with the materials to hand, and who therefore take the inherited thing for the given thing, the made for the found, exactly as the warrant intends. The dollar, the border, the price, the rank: to almost everyone these are simply *there*, the way the world is, and the not-knowing is not a lie told but a formation undergone. This is why the move is so durable and so cheap. It does not require liars. It requires only that a useful idea, once promoted by those it served, be handed down long enough to be mistaken for a fact of nature by people who were born into it and never thought to ask when it was built.

PART VII

THE VERDICT RETURNED TO POLITICS

What the genealogy disarms and what it leaves standing — the genetic fallacy held at full strength, and the posture that follows from it

It remains to say, with the greatest possible care, what this whole exercise does *not* claim, because the value of the inquiry depends entirely on the discipline of its limits, and a genealogy that overreached would forfeit the very rigour that gives it force.

What is left standing

The inquiry holds the *genetic fallacy* at full strength, and the holding is not a concession wrung from it but a load-bearing principle. To show where a thing came from is not to refute it. That property was given a series of self-serving warrants does not prove there should be no property; that the nation was assembled recently does not make national feeling worthless; that the market was made does not mean it works badly. Constructed things are not thereby discredited — they are among the most precious humanity possesses, for language is constructed, and law, and the moral sense itself, and a cathedral is no less beautiful for having been built. The crucial distinction, which the inquiry guards at every step, is between *made* and *arbitrary*. To say an arrangement was made is not to say it is false, or worthless, or interchangeable with any other; an evolved institution may be wise, a built order may be just. It is to say only that the arrangement is *amendable* — that it lies within the reach of human choice, and may therefore be argued over, judged on its merits, kept or changed or repaired, as a fact of nature never can be.

The one thing disarmed, and the posture that follows

So the genealogy disarms exactly one thing, and leaves everything else standing. It disarms the *defence from nature* — the move that ends the argument before it begins by denying there is an argument to have, that smuggles an *ought* out of an *is* and calls a human settlement a natural law in order to place it past all amendment. That defence, and that defence alone, the inquiry destroys, by the simple act of showing the making. And from the destruction a posture follows, which is the practical residue of the whole project. Toward every arrangement that claims to be natural, necessary, eternal, or inevitable, the posture is to *debug rather than defend* — to treat the arrangement as a made thing that can be tested against its results and revised when it fails, not as a revealed truth whose every failure is blamed on insufficient faith. It is to hold every such claim as *tested, not revealed*, and to read the promise of a final and natural state as the warning sign it is. It is to tend the arrangement as one tends a garden, without end and without the expectation of a final victory — pulling the weeds that always return, releasing the stored pressure as reform for one more generation — rather than to worship it as a finished nature one may only obey.

This is the gift the three genealogies were built to give, and it is a single gift in three deliveries: the return of the arrangement to politics. What the warrant took out of the arena of choice, the genealogy puts back. The market that called itself nature, the hierarchy that called itself the verdict of biology, the nation and the race that called themselves the first and oldest nature of all — each was made, by hands we can name, in a past we can date, for reasons we can read. And what was made by human beings, human beings may examine, argue with, and remake. That is the whole of the conclusion, and it is the same word with which each of the three studies ended, abstracted now to stand over them all: nothing here is the furniture of the cosmos; it is the furniture of a room that people built, and may yet rearrange.